

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00

IO-13 SCCT-01 SSM-03 SAM-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 OMB-01

ACDA-07 /110 W

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O P 181237Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1536

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 65

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

CIA WASHDC

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CTF SIX ONE

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CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 6986

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION AUG 18: METN CAMPAIGN STILL MORE A
BATTLE OF NERVES THAN GROUND OPERATION

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REF: BEIRUT 6961

1. SUMMARY: REPORTS OF METN CAMPAIGN STILL AMBIGUOUS. CHRISTIANS MAY BE ATTEMPTING PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE ON PALESTINIANS TO WEAKEN THEIR MOUNTAIN DEFENSES BEFORE ACTUAL ASSAULTS. HEAVY INDISCRIMINATE ARTILLERY FIRE IN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT CONTINUES. CONFRONTATION LINE CLASHES. LITTLE ACTION ELSEWHERE. AL DEPUTY KHOLI TO RETURN TO BEIRUT AS AL MILITARY COMMANDER GHONEIM DEPARTS FOR DAMASCUS. LEFTIST AND PALESTINIAN RHETORIC CONTINUES HOT. KARAME COMMENTS ON GEMAYEL'S PROPOSED FEDERALIZATION, BUT AVOIDS COMMENT ON FRANGIE'S MESSAGE. SARKIS, CHAMOUN AND KAMIL ASSAD ALL MAY VISIT DAMASCUS. AMINE GEMAYEL DETAILS RESULTS OF TELL ZAATAR PRISONER INTERROGATIONS. LEBANESE OFFICES FOR SYRIAN BORDER PERMITS BEGIN OPERATIONS. ALLEGATIONS PFLP ENGINEERED MELOY ASSASSINATION. END SUMMARY.

2. GROUND SITUATION. METN. REPORTS OF START OF METN CAMPAIGN STILL CONTRADICTORY. PHALANGIST RADIO EARLY AUG 18 CLAIMS CHRISTIANS WITHDREW PARTIALLY FROM HAMMANA AREA IN RESPONSE TO SYRIAN REQUEST, TO PERMIT AGREEMENT WHEREBY PALESTINIANS WOULD WITHDRAW FROM MOUNTAIN AREA ENTIRELY. PALESTINIANS SAY CHRISTIAN CLAIM MERELY PSYCHOLOGICAL PLOY. BOTH SIDES HOWEVER REPORT ABOUT 600 ARTILLERY ROUNDS ON FARAYA AND OUYOUNE EL-SIMANE. HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE ALSO IN AREA OF ALEY-KAHLE-ARAYA-BSOUS-BDEDOUN - BSEBA-HOUMAL-KOMATIE-AYTATE AND KEYFOUN.

3. BEIRUT AREA. HEAVY INDISCRIMINATE ARTILLERY FIRE BETWEEN EAST AND PALESTINIANS CONTINUES (SEPTTEL) AND

SOME GROUND ACTION ALONG CONFRONTATION LINE. PALESTINIANS SAY THEY REPELLED CHRISTIAN ATTACKS IN AREA OF CITY CENTER AND DABBASS SQUARE, AND FURTHER SOUTH IN AREA OF GALERIE SEMAAN. NATIONAL LIBERAL "TIGERS" CLAIM HAVE ATTACKED IRAQI AND LIBYAN ELEMENTS IN VICINITY OF LEBANESE UNIVERSITY. CONFIDENTIAL

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PHALANGE POLITICAL CHIEF PAKRADOUNI, RETURNING FROM DAMASCUS, BRIEFED PRESIDENT FRANGIE ON HIS DISCUSSION THERE. AMCHITE RADIO, PROBABLY AS PSYCHOLOGICAL PLOY, CLAIMS PALESTINIANS HAVE BEGUN LEAVE SABRA REFUGEE CAMP (DUE SOUTH OF WEST BEIRUT), FEARING CHRISTIAN ATTACK TOWARDS BEIRUT AIRPORT.

4. GROUND SITUATION ELSEWHERE. IN NORTH, SMALL

LOCALIZED CHRISTIAN ATTACKS ON OUTQIRTS OF TRIPOLI
APPARENTLY CONTINUE, WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT RESULTS.
IN BEKAA, PALESTINIANS CLAIM SMALL GUERRILLA RAID
SUCCESES AGAINST SYRIANS. IN SOUTH, PALESTINIANS CLAIM
SYRIAN ARTILLERY HAS BOMBARDED THEIR POSITIONS
AROUND JEZZINE. LAA CAPTAIN OMAR ABDALLAH,
RECENTLY APPOINTED AS LAA G-2, HAS NOW ALSO BEEN
ASSIGNED AS ACTING SOUTHERN REGION COMMANDER PENDING
ARRIVAL OF NEW COMMANDER, LTC ABD AR-RA'UF KANJ,
CURRENTLY LAA G-4.

5. MEDIATION EFFORTS. AL DEPUTY KHOLI EXPECTED
BACK IN BEIRUT AUG 18 FROM CAIRO. AL MILITARY
COMMANDER GENERAL GHONEIM WENT TO DAMASCUS
AUG 17, L'ORIENT SAYS TO TRY PERSUADE SYRIANS TO
SOFTEN POSITION ON LEBANESE LEFTIST PARTICIPATION
IN QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE. LIBYAN EMISSARY DOURDA
SPENT AUG 17 IN FURTHER MEETINGS WITH PALESTINIANS
AND LEFTISTS. HE SAID HIS MISSION WAS NOT MEDIATION
BUT THAT HIS GOVT WAS DISTURBED BY FAILURE TO APPLY
DAMASCUS AGREEMENT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 6986

6. LEFTIST AND PALESTINIAN VIEWS. JUNBLATT SAYS
"WHAT IS NEEDED IS THAT WE STAND FIRM FOR SIX MONTHS,
AND EVERYTHING WILL CHANGE," AND REPEATED HIS
DETERMINATION TO FIGHT. LEFTIST COMMENTATORS ARE
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SAYING THAT FRANGIE'S MESSAGE ON OCCASION OF SIXTH
ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ASSUMPTION OF POWER HAS TRANSFORMED
END OF HIS TERM OF OFFICE INTO AN IMPASSE, AND THAT HIS
CONDITIONS FOR PEACE ARE PATENTLY UNACCEPTABLE.
YASSIR ARAFAT SAYS THERE IS A "CONSPIRACY FOMENTED
BY KISSINGER TO BALKANIZE THE REGION." ARAFAT ALSO
MET WITH RAYMOND EDDE AND SAEB SALAM AUG 17. TO
JUDGE BY EDDE'S ACCOUNT, HE DID ALL THE TALKING,
RAISING WITH ARAFAT NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS, INCLUDING
ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF APARTMENTS IN WEST BEIRUT BY
PALESTINIANS. PALESTINIAN RANDOM ARTILLERY FIRE
AGAINST EAST BEIRUT, AND PALESTINIAN FAILURE TO
IDENTIFY ASSASSINS OF KHALIL SALEM AND U.S. AMBASSADOR
MELOY.

7. OTHER POLITICAL NOTES. PRIMIN KARAME AND SAEB
SALAM ARE AVOIDING COMMENT ON FRANGIE'S MESSAGE.
(SALAM SAYS HE HAS NOT READ IT.) SALAM AND GHASSAN
TUEINI STILL ATTEMPTING TO PERSUADE KARAME TO ATTEND
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' MEETING. KARAME, COMMENTING ON
PIERRE GEMAYEL'S PROPOSAL FOR FEDERALIZATIOON, SAID
THAT FEDERALIZATION WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN ADMINISTRATIVE
TERMS, BUT THAT HE ABSOLUTELY OPPOSES FEDERALIZATION
IN POLITICAL TERMS. CAMILLE CHAMOUN SAYS FRANGIE WILL
STAY IN POWER "UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE OF HIS MANDATE"
(IMPLYING THAT HE WILL NOT STAY BEYOND THAT TIME?).
CHAMOUN, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE KAMIL ASSAD AND

PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS HAVE ALL REPORTEDLY RECEIVED INVITATIONS TO VISIT DAMASCUS. SAID AKL, POET-PHILOSOPHER-PUBLICIST FOUNDER OF GUARDIANS OF THE CEDAR A YEAR AGO, HAS ANNOUNCED FORMATION OF NEW POLITICAL ENTITY TO BE CALLED "THE PIONEER OF THE LEBANESE CREATORS," WHOSE MISSION SHALL BE TO END PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT JUNBLATTISTS HAVE DECIDED TO RELINQUISH THEIR OFFICES AND MILITARY POSTS IN WEST BEIRUT TO LEBANESE GOVT ORGANIZATIONS UNDER PRIMIN KARAME.

8. TELL ZAATAR POSTSCRIPTS. AMINE GEMAYEL MADE LONG STATEMENT AUG 17 DETAILING RESULTS, HE SAID, OF INTERROGATIONS OF PRISONERS FROM TELL ZAATAR AND NABAA. CONFIDENTIAL

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HE SAID FIGHTERS IN TWO AREAS CAME FROM EVERY TYPE OF PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE LEFTIST ORGANIZATION, AS WELL AS TROTSKYITES, POLISARIOS, TUPUMAROS, MEMBERS OF ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT AND JAPANESE RED ARMY. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN 3000 "PROFESSIONAL" FIGHTERS AT TELL ZAATAR, AND 2400 AT NABAA, AS WELL AS 7000 MILITIA (YOUNGER MEN AND WOMEN) AT TELL ZAATAR AND 3000 AT NABAA. ON PALESTINIAN SIDE, ESCAPED CAMP COMMANDER, CAPT. SULEIMAN, LIKEWISE HELD PRESS CONFERENCE, IN WHICH HE SAID PALESTINIANS LOST ABOUT 3000 DEAD AND 6000 WOUNDED AT TELL ZAATAR. HE SAID SOME 900 CIVILIANS ARE STILL MISSING.

9. SYRIAN BORDER. AN NAHAR SAYS LEBANESE EXIT PERMIT OFFICES AT ZAHLE AND JOUNIEH ARE NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS. MUHAFIZ HENRI LAHOUD OF THE BEKAA SAID RRARELERS CAN SUBMIT APPLICATIONS TO HIS OFFICES AT ZAHLE, CHTOURA, MASNA, BAALBEK OR HERMEL, AND THAT HE WILL EXPEDITE ACTION ON URGENT CASES.

10. AMBASSADOR MELOY ASSASSINATION. AMINE GEMAYEL CLAIMED INTERROGATIONS OF TELL ZAATAR PRISONERS INDICATED MELOY ASSASSINATED BY PFLP. ARAFAT REPEATS PLO STILL INVESTIGATING CASE (SEPTTEL). HUNT

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